1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
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[p. 3a]

126 Usually, field notes were classified, typed in triplicate, and filed according to a modification of the system of the Outline of Cultural Materials prepared by George P. Murdock and others for use in the Cross-Cultural Survey at Yale University (Murdock and others, 1938). In this way it was possible for all workers to find immediately what had already been collected on a subject and to discover discrepancies in accounts when these existed. The system also served to show deficiencies in the data.

123 Certain other problems in field methods arose. Cherán habits place some obstacles in the way of field work. The main occupations of the town are farming and forest exploitation. In [512] the former case, men are usually in the fields all day, often at points several miles distant from town. In the latter instance, men may be away from town for 4 or 5 days at a time. In certain seasons the town is almost deserted during the day. As women will not talk with strange men [609] in the absence of their husbands, it often took many visits to find at home a man we wished to query on some specific point. In addition, yards are surrounded by high walls and it is customary to greet visitors at the yard gate and converse with them on the street. Consequently, it is difficult to gain much insight into home life. Only women can get free access into the houses, and it is unfortunate that Sra. Rendón could not have spent full time in the field. Certain aspects of this study would then have been much better than they are.

In general, the method followed was first to discuss a topic with Sr. Chávez in detail, obtaining from him as complete an account as possible. In some cases Sr. Chávez also wrote supplementary accounts. Efforts were always made to get the names of specific people who were involved. Once we had obtained what might be considered Sr. Chávez's view of a particular aspect of the culture, this was sometimes checked with Sr. Rangel. On other occasions we started with Sr. Rangel and checked with Sr. Chávez. An effort was then made to visit and talk with a large number of the people concerned. For example, after securing Sr. Chávez' account of childbirth, a list of all the professional midwives in town was secured. These were all then visited by Dr. Palacios and interviewed intensively. Some were inter-

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[P. 7a] NU34 Tarasco NU34
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[P. 6 contains no text]

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

131 The Tarascans are one of the principal Indian groups on the central plateau of
[161] Mexico, numbering around 55,000 in 1940. They occupy the central region of the State of Michoacan, mainly in the Lake Pátzcuaro area and the Sierra west of it.
621 They live in sixty-six villages *(pueblos)*[1] and a number of dependent hamlets
[101] *(ranchos)* amidst similar settlements of mestizo Spanish-speaking people.[2]

171 Except for language, the differences be-
178 tween the Tarascans and the nearby rural mestizos are not very great from either the cultural or any other point of view. Four centuries of living together with and under people of European culture (Spanish colonial or modern Mexican) have made the Tarascans considerably interdependent with Mexican national life, and their culture, if analyzed in traits and institutions, might show more of a Spanish than an Indian heritage. The loss of Tarascan speech and consciousness is only one more step in the process of greater integration and acculturation into the Mexican nation, and many of the mestizo villages near the Tarascans have undergone this transformation only recently.

This interrelation with the rest of the nation is seen not only in the content of their culture but also in their participation in the social and political conflicts of Mexico.

668 National issues which have agitated Mexico in later years have their local manifestation in Tarascan towns. Conflicts around land and church rage in many Tarascan villages.

While the basic issues of landownership arise out of local conditions, the local groups fighting those issues are connected with national political groups. *Agraristas* (peasants claiming or receiving lands under the agrarian laws emanating from the Revolution) are found in many villages. Lately the Catholic nationalistic movement of the *sinarquistas* has found strong support among the Tarascans. Their different allegiances make for opposition or
● [609] support of the national and state governments and local agencies, influencing the

1. The terms village and town are used indistinctively throughout this paper to translate the Spanish pueblo.
2 West, 1948, 1.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

attitude of the people toward government officials and toward strangers in general.

The political struggle today has a strong religious tinge, for or against the Church, and local religious institutions are involved. While the traditional system of organizing cult festivals is somewhat in decadence, the Catholic church is strongly supported by the sinarquistas. The government anti-religious policy on the other hand is associated with the agraristas.

The ethnologist approaching a Tarascan town becomes aware of these conflicts on his very first attempt at contact with the people. He confronts the problem of being classified politically and having to define his attitude. This has made work difficult or even impossible in some cases.

The problem, then, of integrating the phenomena studied in Tarascan villages to the wider phenomena of national Mexican culture and society becomes imperative for any meaningful discussion of culture change among these people.

The concept of folk culture as something different from national culture, yet related to it, seems to be the best conceptual tool with which to handle problems arising from the relation between a given local community and the nation as a whole.[3]

Anthropologists studying modern Indian cultures of Mexico have followed the so-called community approach. They have selected one town and have studied the culture of that particular settlement as a self-contained unit. This approach, although useful and necessary, has to be supplemented by relating the local manifestations to the national processes of which they are only part.

The nation can be considered the primary culture carrying unit in our Western civilization. Within the nation, people are divided into local communities determined by common residence (abstraction being made of what determines common residence). Cutting across local communities, other segments of society are not defined by common residence of their members but by some other factor such as property

3. The author experienced the need for this approach while working in the field, but his theoretical approach to this problem took shape in Dr. Julian Steward's Seminar on Anthropology and Community Studies, at Columbia University.

175 423 others being landless. This condition seems to have been present even at the time when land was owned by the village, wherever private property existed within the community. When private ownership became general at the end of the nineteenth century, the differentiation as to wealth within the villages undoubtedly increased.

Although no detailed statistics are available for the Tarascan area, the existing information shows that inequality in landed property within the villages was prevalent, although in different degrees, in the various Tarascan villages. It has been reported for the Cañada villages,[30] Urapicho,[31] Cherán,[32] Tzintzuntzan,[33] Paracho, Charapan and Jarácuaro[34] either for pre-revolutionary or modern times.

The range in inequality is perhaps less in some small Cañada villages, which have preserved as communal holding the agricultural lands of the community.[35] In a large agricultural town like Cherán, where laborers come to work in harvest time from neighboring towns,[36] the differences are considerable. A great number of larger landowners rent part of their lands on a share crop basis to other villagers, and there are some completely landless men.[37]

● [609] Many Tarascan villages discourage the selling of land to outsiders, the approval of the town being necessary for such transactions.[38] The increased inequality seems to have been greater in those places where selling to strangers took place. At the advent of the Revolution, this was the case in some Cañada villages where the largest landholders were mestizos from neighboring towns.[39]

[796] [426] The custom by which individuals take care of financing a given religious festival also led some villagers to sell or pawn and later lose their lands. Such was the case in Urapicho before the Revolution.[40] In La Cañada this was not only a factor in hastening the loss of lands but also the way by which outsiders got hold of them, for the Indians pawned their lands to moneylenders in mestizo towns.[41]

175 423 464 In all towns where there are landless people, the latter go out to work in neighboring towns or farms, for instance Nahua-

30. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 291; Sáenz, 1936, 255-6.
31. Beals, 1946, 131.
32. *Ibid.*, 12, 61-3, 66, 98-9.
33. Foster, 1948, 71-2, 173-5.
34. Field notes.
35. West, 1948, 32-3.
36. Beals, 1946, 61.
37. *Ibid.*, 90.
38. West, 1948, 32.
39. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 291; Sáenz, 1936, 255-6.
40. Beals, 1946, 131.
41. Mendieta y Núñez, 1940, 291; Sáenz, 1936, 255-6.

2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
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Pátzcuaro

241 years. Therefore, men who own land in only
311 one 'plain' plant only every other year. Conse-
621 quently, everyone tries to have land in at least two 'plains'."[47]

Similarly in Jarácuaro, the whole island is divided into two sections which are alternately cultivated.

West describes this system as general in the Sierra.[48]

[609] Given this system of cultivation, the resistance against selling land to outsiders is easily understandable as all farmers have to work in close agreement. Any outsider using his land in a different way would disrupt the whole system.

This question of disintegrative versus
482 conservative tendencies within the villages
621 can also be discussed in relation to a sub-
438 sistence economy or a market economy. No
433 doubt, in proportion as production is for consumption within the village, the easier it is for the community to hold its own against disrupting influences; the more it is intended for a larger market, the more likely it is that outside influences will penetrate the life of the community.

439 The connection of any Tarascan village economy, whether agricultural or depending on crafts, to the national and world
433 markets is undisputed and has been set forth clearly.[49] Part of the agricultural products, practically all handicrafts, and a sizable amount of labor are sold out by producers, while most consumption goods are bought from outside, with the exception of part of the food (housing and clothing to a much lesser extent). However, production of food, mainly corn for the villagers' own consumption, is basic to the economy of the villages and their relation to the national economy. This fact determines their attitude toward land and corn.

423 Land is the most desired form of property
435 and the safest way of investing money, because of the security it will give as a source
[185] of corn. The ability to produce one's own corn is the supreme aspiration of every farmer.

433 An analysis of agricultural economics shows that farming on poor land in Cherán
241 (a prosperous farming town) and Tzintzuntzan is done at a loss; that is, production costs (equipment, taxes, labor, etc.) are greater than the value of the crop.[50] Owners of such lands could earn more by hiring out as laborers than by working their own fields.[51] This way of farming

47. Beals, 1946, 20.
48. West, 1948, 39.
49. Beals, 1946, 56-9; Foster, 1948, 145-6, 220-30.
50. Foster, 1948, 76-8, table 14; Beals, 1946, 65-6.
51. Foster, 1948, 78.

[364] only on the days preceding a town fiesta. The
653 householder is also expected to work on certain community enterprises, such as repairing roads or bridges and the water system. Likewise, unless
625 he occupies some special position which exempts him, or is well along in years, he will be expected at times to join the *ronda*, or night watch, which polices his *cuartel*, or *barrio*.

Cherán is unique in its attitude toward visitors.
351 We have already mentioned the general occurrence of fences. These are usually high enough to prevent passers-by on the street from peering into the house yard. Visitors always knock at the
514 gate or call out, announcing themselves. As some-
609 times the inmates will not respond to a knock, the call is useful in getting a response. Unless the visitor is a relative, *compadre*, or neighbor

[Continued on p.32b]

## RELATION OF THE TARASCAN HOUSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT
### CHERÁN

The wooden house, or "*troje*," of Cherán is
362 relatively dry but, in the absence of any method of heating, it is uncomfortably cold most of the year, especially at night. The kitchen floor is
[354] frequently damp; although it is heated by fire, ventilation is inadequate, and the smoke often irritating to eyes and throat. On windy days, also, drafts whistle through cracks or under the lower edges of the walls. The masonry-adobe type of construction also presents drawbacks. It is not heated either and, while wind is less apt to penetrate, it is often unsatisfactorily ventilated. Moreover, the dampness climbs up through the walls at least 6 months of every year and into every corner of the room.

Probably the "*troje*," or house loft, can most
251 easily be made impervious to rodents if it be well
362 built, and if bunches of cactus be fastened at strategic points on the outside walls. Rarely, however, is this true. In addition, the roof often permits entry of birds, particularly half-wild domesticated pigeons, and scarcely ever is anything done to prevent their forays on the maize. It is doubtful if the masonry-adobe structure is superior in any respect for loft storage. For main-floor storage it probably is inferior owing to the greater dampness. [Continued bottom of page 32b]

[p. 32a]

3:Beals, Carrasco & McCorkle E-5 (1940-1942) 1944
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574 609 with whom especially friendly relations exist, normally the visitor is not invited into the house yard. Conversation takes place at the gate of the yard; if it bids fair to be protracted, the householder may even step into the street and continue the conversation there, closing the gate behind him.

351 574 184 So far as is known, customs in other mountain towns are similar in all respects except for the attitude toward visitors. In most towns fences are rarer than in Cherán, and the visitor is invited to enter. In Sevina, it is customary for the visitor to push open the gate, pass into the middle of the house yard, and then announce himself. Two Cherán men who accompanied Beals to Sevina, commented at length on this difference; they were quite plainly shocked at the custom.

## RELATION OF THE TARASCAN HOUSE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

362 136 The major insect pests are fleas. In some villages there are also bedbugs. There seems little to choose between the various types of structures, although the earthen floor of the kitchen facilitates the activities of fleas. At certain seasons of the year, all Tarascan houses swarm with fleas to such an extent that the residents often cannot get a satisfactory night's sleep.

Apparently, the climatic conditions are not propitious for large numbers of houseflies or related species. Those that do exist, however, have free access into houses. Mosquitoes and other noxious insects are unknown at Cherán.

362 164 [515] In the lack of good medical statistics, it is impossible to estimate the relation between health and housing conditions. Fleas may be responsible for the transmission of some cases of typhus and perhaps other diseases. Relative to most places in Mexico, however, insect-borne disease is probably at a minimum. Head lice and, to some extent, body lice occur, despite thorough weekly baths, and the crowded living and sleeping conditions in the kitchen must facilitate transmission of the insects.

The most serious health hazards of the Tarascan house probably lie in the damp condition much of the year, lack of ventilation, and close crowding of the inmates, especially at night. These conditions facilitate the spread of all diseases trans-

262 raw (when aged or *pasado*) or, more recently, cooked on Easter, and sometimes on the village saint's day are distributed to all inhabitants at the end of the fiesta.[101] Moreover, cacao beans [439] were formerly an important trade article imported into the upland pueblos. In most households in 252 the Sierra the beans were roasted on the *comal* and then wet-ground on the metate. Mixed with piloncillo and cinnamon, the chocolate "dough" was made into small disks (2 in. diameter), called k'ékua. A chocolate drink is made by dissolving the k'ékua in hot water. A few storekeepers still make disks from ground chocolate purchased from mestizo wholesalers. Today chocolate is [609] taken principally on fiesta days, and is often served to visiting strangers. Other tropical fruits, such 262 as the common banana, mango, pineapple, mamey, chicozapote, zapote prieto, etc., are brought into the Sierra in season. They are eaten at all times and appear to have no ceremonial significance. Pineapple is used for a fermented beverage, *tepache*.

244 **Specialized truck gardening.**—This is a more recent type of horticulture among the Tarascans. 312 They have adopted intensive commercial production of vegetables in only a few well-watered spots near large mestizo markets. The most notable truck gardening district has developed on the narrow stretches of lacustrine soil along the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro, where irrigation is practiced. Although water is carried in buckets to some of the smaller gardens (e. g., in Puácuaro), most of the vegetable plots are irrigated with the t'apáratarákua, or *pala*, possibly a pre-Columbian invention.[102] This instrument consists of a wooden [406] spoonlike container fastened to a long pine pole, which, resting on a crosspiece, is used like a lever to scoop water from ditches or wells (fig. 4; pl. 7). Along the wide western shore of Pátzcuaro shallow ditch wells are dug down to the water level (5 to 6 ft. from the surface), from which water is scooped and distributed to vegetable plots by a system of small canals. Along the narrow shores of the Tarıfu-k'éri Peninsula (where the water table is low) small canals have been constructed to permit lake water to flow into a ditch well, from which the water is lifted with the *pala* to high levels. In

[101] The latter custom was reported from Charapan and Patamban.

[102] The provenience of the *t'apáratarákua* is not clear. Its mention has not been encountered in colonial documents; the Relación de Michoacán (p. 23), however, speaks of irrigated maize, presumably around Lake Pátzcuaro. Today the *t'apáratarákua* is used also at Tarajero, in the basin of Zamapu.

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[P. 73-b]

444 which handles mainly staple food imports (salted dried beef, dried fish, salt, piloncillo, lard, beans, and wheat flour) and beverages (soft drinks, beer, and hard liquors). A small assortment of canned goods can be purchased in the stores of the larger towns. Often other items, such as cigarettes, kerosene, and metal household ware, are carried. In the small villages stores are customarily operated by well-to-do Tarascan families, often by the wife and children, while the man farms.[167] In the large pueblos the storekeepers are usually mestizos who have moved in from neighboring towns.[168] [77] Significantly, the infiltration of Spanish-speaking storekeepers into indigenous towns often represents one of the initial steps toward hispanicization of the native population.[169]

443 **The professional traders.**—The *huacalero* (inspikuɨiri, or "one who trades") represents the last vestige of the ancient Indian carriers (*tamemes*), formerly important agents of distribution throughout Mexico. Few such traveling merchants, each of whom carries his wares in a wooden crate (*huacal*, kópaɨakua) tied to his back, remain; the majority have been displaced by burro and motor transportation. As late as 1900 large 443 numbers of Tarascan *huacaleros* from many 439 Sierra villages carried handicrafts into the Balsas Basin, the coast of Guerrero, and Colima and returned with tropical fruit, salt, and cheese. Today about 15 *huacaleros* operate out of Pamatácuaro, carrying locally made wooden spoons and *bateas*, Patamban pottery, *morrales* from

[438] [443] made goods from Zamora, Guadalajara, Morelia, and México. Regional handicrafts were represented as follows:

| Article: | Origin | Vendors (number) |
|---|---|---|
| Blankets | Charapan | 10 walking vendors. |
| Blankets | Jiquilpan | 1 stall. |
| Rebozos | Paracho | 1 stall. |
| Women's belts | Nahuatzen | 1 stall. |
| Straw hats | Apo | 1 stall. |
| Agave rope | Tarecuato | 2 stalls. |
| Pottery | Patamban | 12 stalls. |
| Pottery | Santa Fé | 1 stall. |
| Pottery | San Juan Tlaquepaque (Jalisco). | 1 stall. |
| Wooden tops | Paracho | 1 stall. |
| Wicker baskets | Tangamandapio | 1 stall. |
| Huaraches | Los Reyes | 3 stalls. |
| Huaraches | Peribán | 1 stall. |

[167] Cherán, as Beals points out (1946, p. 79), is unique in that, although it is the largest Tarascan town, the storekeepers are Tarascan.

[168] For example, although Tarecuato is almost wholly native in speech, its three or four stores are operated by mestizos. Merchants of Paracho, Patamban, and Nahuatzen are all mestizos.

[169] Apart from its distributive function, the village store (mestizo or indigenous) frequently serves as the only readily accessible public place where a stranger may introduce himself and ask questions about the town. Except in the municipal seats, the town officials, all of whom hold nonremunerative posts, are rarely found in the *juzgado*, or town hall

[609]